

# Health Reports, March 2024

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, March 20, 2024

---

## Canadian women aged 65 and older were less likely than men to visit medical specialists and get non-emergency tests

Canada is experiencing rapid population aging. As the number of older people grows, health care use, including the need for specialized care services, is expected to increase. Specialized health care services include access to medical specialists, non-emergency tests, and non-emergency surgeries.

The study "[Access to specialized health care services among older Canadians](#)" found that an estimated 2.6 million Canadian adults aged 65 years and older (43.4%) visited medical specialists, 1.4 million (23.2%) got non-emergency tests, and 0.6 million (10.4%) had non-emergency surgeries in 2019/2020. Women were less likely than men to have visited medical specialists and have received non-emergency tests. Older Canadians with a regular medical doctor were more likely than those without a regular medical doctor to have visited medical specialists (1.9 times more likely for men and 1.8 times more likely for women) and to have received non-emergency tests (1.8 times more likely for men and 2.2 times more likely for women) even after accounting for other demographic, socioeconomic, and health-related factors.

## Older Canadians with multiple health conditions were more likely to use specialized health care services

Compared with older Canadians who were healthy, those classified as multimorbidity, high stress-multimorbidity-disability, and having poor physical and mental health were more likely to use specialized health care services. For example, among men with poor physical and mental health, 61.5% visited medical specialists and 34.6% got non-emergency tests; in contrast, among men who were comparatively healthy, 37.7% visited medical specialists and 17.3% got non-emergency tests. Similarly, among those women with poor physical and mental health, 55.7% visited medical specialists and 37.9% got non-emergency tests. In contrast, among women who were comparatively healthy, 29.9% visited medical specialists and 15.0% got non-emergency tests.

The higher use of specialized health care services among older Canadians with multiple health conditions compared with those who were healthy persisted even after accounting for other demographic, socioeconomic, and health-related factors. For example, for women, the increased odds of having visited a medical specialist were 1.9 in the multimorbidity group, 2.8 in the high stress-multimorbidity-disability group, and 3.8 in the poor physical and mental health group.

## Women were more likely than men to experience difficulty visiting medical specialists and getting non-emergency tests

Among older Canadians who accessed specialized health care services in 2019/2020, an estimated half-million (15.6%) reported having difficulty getting these services. This included difficulty getting a referral, difficulty getting an appointment, wait time being too long, and services not being available either at the time required or in the area. Women were more likely than men to experience difficulty visiting medical specialists and getting non-emergency tests.

### Did you know we have a mobile app?

Get timely access to data right at your fingertips by downloading the [StatsCAN app](#), available for free on the [App Store](#) and on [Google Play](#).



The article "[Access to specialized health care services among older Canadians](#)" is now available in the March 2024 online issue of *Health Reports*, Vol. 35, No. 03 (**82-003-X**).

This issue of *Health Reports* also contains the article "[Exploring the use of experimental small area estimates to examine the relationship between individual-level and area-level community belonging and self-rated health](#)."

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [infostats@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).